

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

Sub A3 1. Footwear for protecting a foot comprising:
an upper defining an opening, the upper including:
3 an instep portion to cover a metatarsal section of the foot,
4 an elastic instep guard positioned on the instep portion to protect the metatarsal
5 section of the foot, the instep guard including an elastic support having a plurality of hollow
6 passages, and
7 a steel toe for protecting a toe region of the foot; and
8 an outsole attached to the upper to define a cavity that receives the foot through the
9 opening.

Sub A4 2. The footwear of claim 1, wherein the instep guard includes:
a first sheet; and
3 a plurality of support members extending from the first sheet to define the plurality of the
4 hollow passages.

1 3. The footwear of claim 2, wherein the instep guard further comprises a second sheet
2 connected to the first sheet by the support members.

Sub A4 4. The footwear of claim 1, wherein at least some of the plurality of holes are defined by the
1 first sheet and the support members.

1 5. The footwear of claim 1, wherein the hollow passages are filled with air.

1 6. The footwear of claim 1, wherein the hollow passages are elongated.

1 7. The footwear of claim 1, wherein at least one of the elongated hollow passages has cross-
2 section that is either circular, ovoid, or triangular in shape.

1 8. The footwear of claim 1, wherein the support members define a first type of elongated
2 passage with a first cross-section shape and a second type of elongated passage with a second
3 cross-section shape.

1 9. The footwear of claim 1, wherein the instep guard includes a resilient material.

1 10. The footwear of claim 1, wherein the instep guard is positioned on an underside of the
2 instep portion of the footwear.

1 11. The footwear of claim 10, further comprising:

2 a liner positioned beneath the instep portion of the footwear, the instep guard being
3 positioned between the instep portion and the liner;
4 stitching around the instep guard attaching the liner to the instep portion.

1 12. The footwear of claim 11, further comprising:

2 a steel toe positioned on a toe portion of the upper, the instep guard being attached to the
3 toe portion.

1 13. An instep guard for use in an instep section of footwear to protect the metatarsals of a
2 foot, the instep guard comprising:

3 an elastic support having a shape and size commensurate with the instep section of the
4 footwear, the elastic support having a plurality of hollow passages.

1 14. The instep guard of claim 13, wherein the elastic support includes:

2 a first sheet; and
3 a plurality of support members extending from the first sheet to define the plurality of the
4 hollow passages.

1 15. The instep guard of claim 13 further comprising a second sheet connected to the first
2 sheet by the plurality of support members.

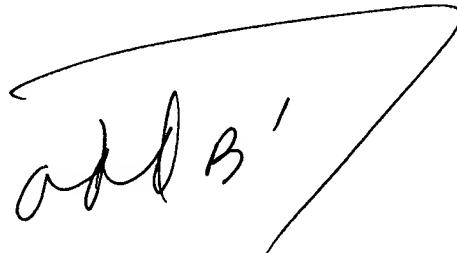
1 16. The instep guard of claim 13, wherein at least some of the plurality of holes are defined
2 by the first sheet and the support members.

1 17. The instep guard of claim 13, wherein the hollow passages are filled with air.

1 18. The instep guard of claim 13, wherein the hollow passages are elongated.

1 19. The instep guard of claim 13, wherein at least one of the elongated hollow passages has
2 cross-section that is either circular, ovoid, or triangular in shape.

- 1 20. The instep guard of claim 13, wherein the support members define a first type of
- 2 elongated passage with a first cross-section shape and a second type of elongated passage
- 3 with a second cross-section shape.
- 1 21. The instep guard of claim 13, wherein the elastic support includes a resilient material.
- 1 22. The instep guard of claim 13, wherein the elastic support is positioned between the instep
- 2 portion of the footwear and a liner of the footwear.
- 1 23. Footwear for protecting a foot comprising:
2 an upper defining an opening, the upper including:
3 an instep portion to cover a metatarsal section of the foot, and
4 an elastic instep guard positioned on the instep portion to protect the metatarsal
5 section of the foot, the instep guard including an elastic support having a plurality of hollow
6 passages; and
7 an outsole attached to the upper to define a cavity that receives the foot through the
8 opening.



add B'